

UNSCRAMBLING JUDGEMENT

by Ben Nelson

Jesus says in Luke 6:37 "*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.*" That is pretty clear, pretty straight forward, and it is pretty obvious what it means, right? This is a scripture that it seems every one and his brother has committed to memory. In fact every unsaved worldling has memorized this. "Don't Judge - Don't Judge - Don't Judge". It is preached from pulpits, and in the class rooms. The word they use in school is Tolerance. We must have tolerance for anyone else's "life style", religion, or attitudes. Have you ever tried to preach the gospel to someone, only to be told that you are being judgmental. I heard an interview on the radio, not long ago, where the Baptist Church was being criticized for their evangelism efforts toward Jews. The entire Baptist Church was accused of intolerance, and bigotry because they believed that the Jews needed Jesus. The Baptists were "judging" the Jews, and the world was outraged.

It is even worse in the Church. We have been told so often by the world, and from the pulpit not to judge, that no one in the church is willing to judge anything.

Is this what Jesus had in mind when He said "*Judge not*"? Did he want us to blindly accept anything, and let everyone continue on their paths to hell? Or have we pulled this out of context and happily gone along with the world's take on Jesus?

This one statement of Jesus is not by any means the whole Biblical teaching on judging. In fact it is not the only thing that Jesus says on judging. So lets turn on some light. Move down the page a few verses to Luke 6:41 and 42 . Jesus here is talking about picking the spec out of a friends eye when you have a beam in your own eye. At first glance it sounds like He is saying the same thing, but look at how it ends. "*Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.*" As you can see, you are still instructed to help you brother with the spec in his eye, but only after you have taken care of the problem in your own eye.

Now look at John 7:24 . Again Jesus is speaking . "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*" This He said when He was under attack from the Jews in the temple. He basically told them to look at the works He was doing, and judge whether or not He was doing the will of the Father. If we were accused (falsely or otherwise) today in one of our Churches, would our response be "judge me with righteous judgment", or would it be "you have no right to judge me". I expect that many of us would have to answer the later.

The fact is, the New Testament tells us to judge repeatedly and gives us many examples of Jesus and the apostles judging. Lets look at a few.

Jesus was judgemental doing one on one evangelism

with the woman at the well in Samaria. He said that the Samaritans didn't even know what they were worshipping. (John 4:22) Not to mention the fact that He had just brought out into the open that she was an adulterous woman, have had 5 husbands, and currently living in sin.

Jesus judged the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida in Matthew 11:21 where he pronounces woe upon them for showing no repentance in the presence of His works.

Jesus judged the Pharisees over and over for their hardness of heart, their hypocrisy, even for their theology. Read Matthew Chapter 23 - the whole thing - and tell me that Jesus didn't judge.

And what of Jesus in Revelation Chapter 2 and 3. He says in each of the 7 letters to 7 churches - "*I know thy works*", and he praises some of the works, and condemns other works.

Perhaps you think that Jesus, being the perfect and holy Son of God, had the right to judge, (and well He does, He is the Judge!) but that does not give us the right to judge. Lets look at some of the other characters in the New Testament.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to hear John the Baptist this is what he said: "*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" (Matt 3:7) Pretty judgmental, wouldn't you say?

What of Paul, Mr. Grace himself. Surly he is not guilty of Judging, unless of course you consider what he said in the closing of his first letter to Timothy. "*Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works*" (2 Tim 4:14). Or a few pages earlier in chapter 2 he says this: "*But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymanaeus and Philetus; Who*

concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim 2:16-18) He names names, and warns people to be careful of this one, and watch out for that one. Remember the time he told the Church in Corinth to throw a guy out of the congregation "*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*" (1 Cor 5:5)

Do you remember the story in Acts chapter 13 where Paul was trying to win Sergius Paulus to the Lord, and

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Elymas the sorcerer was trying to turn him away from the faith. Then Paul (who was incidentally filled with the Holy Ghost) said this: "*And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.*" Can you image! Paul, in the power of the Holy Ghost, put blindness on this man.

Jude said there were "*certain men crept in unawares*" and he called them "*ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Later he called them "*spots in your feasts of charity*" and he declared in no uncertain terms that they are not only lost, but that they were dragging others down with them. In fact the whole point of the book of Jude is that we need to use judgement - and to "*contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints*"

We are told to judge prophecy, we are encouraged to be like the

Bereans and go home and check out what we have been taught, and make sure it lines up with scripture. We are told to judge a tree by it's fruit, and if one comes to us with some doctrine that is not Christ's, not to even bid him God speed. In short we are told by example, and imperative to judge.

The only judgement we are doing is in our evangelism. We pre-judge men and women to decide if they would be a good person to share the gospel with. Do we think they would receive our message, or would preaching to them simply push them further away from God. Strangely this is one area where we are told not to judge. Jesus said "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" and so there is no need for judgement, just obedience.

Unfortunately, far too many of our congregations have bought this twisted scripture, and it has immobilized the body of Christ. This lack of judgement means no confrontation. We let our brothers and sisters continue in a sin that will eventually damn their souls, rather than take the risk of confrontation.

The difficulty with judging is that you must judge yourself first. Before you go meddling with that spec, take care of your own beam. But know this, that beam must go. Jesus does not want us to tolerate our brothers sin, but stand with him, and pull him out of the fire! Galatians 6:1 & 2 says this: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*"

Is there a place for judgement in the Church? Absolutely! Judge righteous judgement, and start with yourself.